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ABSTRACT

Basic Speech Communication courses which emphasize public speaking are an opportunity to teach critical thinking skills in the form of critical listening. Students can be taught to analyze the evidence or ideas of others and make critical judgments about the validity or quality of materials presented, using a series of steps involving student and teacher critiques of student speeches. Working with an evaluation form, students begin by analyzing their classmates' first assignment (informative speeches), listening for progressively smaller elements of this type of rhetorical act. A discussion of the speeches and the errors made is then led by the teacher. For the second speaking assignment (speaking with a visual aid), students are charged to make specific comments and suggestions during the critique period, as well as to fill out the evaluation form. With the third assignment (a persuasive speech), students listen specifically for a demonstration of need, the significance for the audience, use of appeals, the meeting of objections, and the action desired, and then must decide if the speech was persuasive. With their final speech, students must submit a formal critical analysis of a speech given by a classmate, to be delivered orally. This directed listening strategy ensures that students become aware of patterns of effective listening while receiving public speaking instruction as well. (Six references, and an appendix containing speech criteria and a copy of an evaluation form are included.) (JC)

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FROM CRITICAL LISTENING TO CRITICAL ANALYSIS:

A DIRECTED LISTENING APPROACH FOR THE BASIC COURSE

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CRITICAL THINKING AND THE SPEECH COMMUNICATION CURRICULUM

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FROM CRITICAL LISTENING TO CRITICAL ANALYSIS:

A DIRECTED LISTENING APPROACH FOR THE BASIC COURSE

In the Basic Course which gives its primary activity emphasis to public speaking, the opportunities for instructing students in critical thinking skills are abundant. One definition of critical thinking, "thought that involves analyzing a problem, selecting and examining evidence, interpreting data, determining logical relationships, testing reasoning, reaching conclusions, and selecting appropriate language" (Keefe, Harte and Norton 360), provides a foundation for the natural inclusion of teaching critical listening.

Critical listening employs critical thinking skills and processes as it involves "listening to analyze the evidence or ideas of others in the group and making critical judgments about the validity and/or quality of materials presented" (Barker, Wahlers, Watson, Kibler 83).

Purposes of listening have been categorized as appreciative, discriminative, therapeutic, listening for comprehension, and critical listening (Ehninger, Gronbeck, McKerrow, and Monroe 24). They conclude that of these categories "The most sophisticated kind of listening is **critical listening**. It demands that auditors become fully engaged with the message in order not simply to understand it, but to interpret it, judge its strengths and weaknesses, and assign some worth to it" (25).

Auer labels three different kinds of critics, each of whom has his own special focus: **scholar-critics** ("what happened?"), **peer-critics** ("how was it done?"), and **citizen-critics** ("is it significant?")" (Auer 349). Students in the Basic Course are primarily **peer-critics**, though one would hope they would incorporate some of the focus of the other two types as well.

The purpose of this paper is to suggest a way in which the regular public speaking assignments in the Basic Course can be used for a critical

listening model, with the procedures suggested providing the critical instrument. Cohen and Nagel suggest that a critical instrument should possess two distinguishing characteristics: (a) The end aimed at by that instrument is a reflective rather than an impulsive judgment. (b) The method employed in arriving at judgment is equipped with controls that render it self-regulative" (Ehninger and Brockriede 16).

The Directed Listening Approach, if followed carefully, serves as a critical instrument for the development of listening abilities through a logical, orderly process, and gradually enables the "peer-critic" to test and demonstrate his/her critical listening skills by sharing these observations with classmates in the form of a critical analysis of classroom speeches.

In a basic speech course which gives its primary emphasis to public speaking, speaking assignments often take the following order: an informative speech, an informative speech using audio-visual aids, a persuasive speech, and a final speech. While these general ends may be assigned in different ways, this pattern is a common one. For the purposes of this paper, this assignment structure will be assumed.

The Directed Listening Approach results in Instructor-Centered oral critiques of classroom speeches early in the term, and moves to Student-Centered oral critical analyses by the end of the term.

Prior to the first day of assigned speeches, a Speech Criteria Sheet (SCS) for evaluating speeches has been distributed and explained. Each student has been given a corresponding Evaluation Form providing a grid for numerical evaluations of each speech given in this assignment of Speeches to Inform (Appendix A). STUDENT CRITIQUE RESPONSIBILITIES include: the numerical evaluation to be turned in to the Instructor following the completion of all speeches in this assignment, a complete written critique and the possibility of oral comments for each round of speech assignments.

Each student is required to turn in a complete sentence outline of

his/her speech at the beginning of the class period in which the speech is due. This outline and the Evaluation Form are used for critiquing and grading by the INSTRUCTOR.

An explanation is given that on each day of the Speeches to Inform, additional items will be added to this list, so that by the time these speeches have concluded, the students will have been directed to listen for all the basic elements of a rhetorical act of this type. By focusing on individual elements in this Directed Approach, they will be able eventually to hear them as they as they comprise the whole: overlapping, simultaneous, and interrelated.

The rationale for this approach can be provided for the students in several ways, indicating that learning in a broad context often precedes fine details and specialization. One basic example is that of acquiring motor skills--i.e., infants must learn large, general movements, before they can master the precision needed for grasping a specific object.

An example that parallels listening to a speech, and makes the point rather clearly for students, concerns listening in a Music Survey course: identification of the broad movements, or segments, of a composition; recognition of the theme; identification of the theme as it occurs throughout the composition; hearing of theme variations and changes as they occur throughout the piece, etc. Finally, after careful focus on all its separate parts, which may be a lengthy, detailed process, the listener can reassemble them, hearing and appreciating the composition in its entirety.

Having established the rationale and the approach to be taken, the classroom speeches are given. The following pattern may be used, asking students to focus specifically (though not exclusively) on the items noted for that day.

FIRST SPEAKING ASSIGNMENT: SPEECHES TO INFORM (4 Days):

DAY 1	DAY 2	DAY 3	DAY 4
I. INTRODUCTION			Overall
		METHODS TO ACHIEVE PURPOSE	Delivery,
		(HUMOR, COMMON BONDS, ETC.)	Including
		GUIDE TOWARD PROPOSITION	
			Vocal
		TRANSITION	Aspects
II. PROPOSITION			
		TRANSITION	
			Visual
III. BODY			Aspects
	Major Points	INTERNAL SUMMARIES	
	Type of Organization		
	(topical, reason, etc.)		
	Development		
	(examples, statistics,etc.)		Style
		TRANSITION	
			Audience
IV. CONCLUSION			Analysis
		METHODS TO ACHIEVE	And
		PURPOSE (REVIEW OF	Adaptation
		POINTS, ILLUSTRATION,	
		INFORMAL SUMMARY, ETC.)	
		ACTION: IMPLIED OR REQUESTED	

At the end of each day of speeches, the Instructor will provide general remarks, mentioning notable examples of the day's focused items which occurred in the speeches given. Other positive comments are made, as warranted, and student comments are accepted, though not required. If there seem to be common problems, errors, or misunderstandings, these are discussed in class. Otherwise, they are mentioned in the Instructor's written critique which is returned at the end of the class period with the outline and grade, or are discussed in individual conferences.

The Instructor should review the rationale and goals established for listening in this first assignment, and encourage student comments on skills they are acquiring in identifying the elements of an informative speech.

It should be noted that during these four days, the Instructor has taken the most active role in critiquing rhetorical efforts. This method described thus far accomplishes several purposes:

1. It focuses on the basics of rhetorical criticism.
2. It provides a model for constructive criticism.
3. It provides instruction in speaking and listening.
4. It helps to lessen student anxiety concerning peer-criticism.
5. It gives the students opportunities to practice their roles as peer-critics in a progressive pattern.

SECOND SPEAKING ASSIGNMENT: TO INFORM WITH AUDIO-VISUAL AIDS (4 DAYS)

DAYS 1-4: Students have been referred to the Speech Criteria Sheet and have noted the specific criteria for audio-visual presentations. (See SCS) The same STUDENT RESPONSIBILITIEES apply as before: completion of a numerical evaluation form for each student, full written critique of one student speech, **and a responsibility for specific comments and suggestions during the critique period.** INSTRUCTOR RESPONSIBILITIES of detailed written comments on outline continue.

The students are instructed that, in addition to listening for all the

criteria for Informative Speaking, they will evaluate specifically the use of the audio-visual aids in the presentation. They are asked to consider two aspects:

1. THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE AID TO THE TOPIC. Is it a vital element? Would the speech be complete without it? Does it add to the understanding of the topic? Is it functional? Is it pleasing to the eye or ear?

2. THE MECHANICS OF ITS USE. Is it shown at the appropriate time? Can everyone see (or hear) it? Does its appearance (or sound) strengthen the topic or distract from it? Does it work properly? Is the speaker in control of the aid?

Critiques are conducted at the end of the class period, after all speeches have been given for that day. **Those students with written critique assignments will comment orally on what they have seen and heard from the speaker assigned to them.** The Instructor leads the critique session and encourages other class members to participate in the discussion.

Following this Informative Speaking with A/V Aids assignment, the Instructor and students identify the skills learned in rhetorical analysis thus far.

THIRD SPEAKING ASSIGNMENT: TO PERSUADE (4 DAYS)

DAYS 1-4: Students have again been referred to the Speech Criteria Sheet and have examined the criteria for Persuasive Speaking. All STUDENT AND INSTRUCTOR RESPONSIBILITIES REMAIN THE SAME AS IN DAYS 1-4 FOR THE PRECEDING ASSIGNMENT.

Students are instructed to listen for all the criteria discussed in the first two assignments and, having studied persuasive theory, listen specifically for:

1. DEMONSTRATION OF NEED/SIGNIFICANCE FOR AUDIENCE.

2. USE OF APPEALS: ETHOS, PATHOS, LOGOS.

3. BOTH SIDES PERSUASION, MEETING OBJECTIONS.

4. ACTION DESIRED

5. DID THE SPEECH MAKE A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR THINKING OR ACTIONS -- i.e., DID IT WORK?

Critiques of the Speeches to Persuade are conducted as in the preceding assignment, with increasing responsibility for oral critiques belonging to the student assigned the detailed written critique. Particular emphasis should be given to the specific criteria for persuasive speaking.

At the conclusion of the Speeches to Persuade, the Instructor and students discuss the elements of Rhetorical Analysis, and review the skills acquired during this progressive pattern of Directed Listening.

FINAL SPEAKING ASSIGNMENT (TYPE TO BE CHOSEN BY STUDENT OR INSTRUCTOR)

STUDENT AND INSTRUCTOR RESPONSIBILITIES for critiquing remain as in Days 1-4 in Assignment Two. Additionally, each peer-critic will have total responsibility for a formal critical analysis of a speech given by a classmate. This peer rhetorical analysis will be given from the lectern at the front of the room, with observations, evaluations, and suggestions as deemed appropriate. This pattern continues each day until the speeches have been completed and each student has formally critiqued and evaluated one student rhetorical act.

SUMMARY

While this Directed Listening Approach involves many steps, its advantages are reflected in several ways:

1. Students become more aware of patterns of effective listening.
2. The Instructor-Centered critiques early in the term provide a model for their own evaluations and judgments about rhetorical acts both in the classroom and out.
3. The progressive emphasis on specific criteria enables the students to focus on one area at a time, allowing time for assimilation of

concepts.

4. Student responsibility for oral critiques parallels knowledge of rhetorical analysis.
5. The formal rhetorical analysis at the conclusion of the term accomplishes:
    a. A practical demonstration of critical abilities.
    b. More speaking in front of a group, with the added experience of Impromptu Speaking.
    c. Increased attention from audience.
    d. A realization of <u>personal accountability</u> for judgments made and reported. (While all the preceding advantages have value, the last one may be one of the most important concepts in the Basic Course. When a student realizes that he/she is accountable for criticism given, whether positive or negative, that is a valuable lesson in lifetime citizenship.)

"Day-to-day listening...is made simpler if you isolate the desired message and look for the main points being made. If you have to listen more analytically, you will need additional assistance provided by note-taking or other devices for recording the conversation....Listening is, by design, selective" (Goss 96).

In listening, whether "day-to-day" or for more serious analytical purposes, students find that additional assistance in developing their critical listening (and thinking) abilities with a simple, clearly organized critical instrument.

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APPENDIX

SPEECH CRITERIA -- SPEECH 101

I. VOCAL: Animation, variety, pitch, volume, quality, rate, pronunciation, diction.

II. VISUAL: Eye contact, gestures, posture, movement, animation, grooming.

III. STYLE: Perceived image of competence, apparent desire to communicate, adaptation to audience, naturalness, conversational approach, appropriate language, correct grammar, flexibility, enthusiasm.

IV. CONTENT: Introduction, Proposition, Body, Conclusion. See I, II, III, IV on the Outline Instruction Sheet.

V. SPECIFIC CRITERIA

Informative	A/V Aid	Persuasive
Provides Clarity Maintains Interest Aids Understanding Contains Substantive, Worthwhile Info. Uses Sufficient Verbal Supports (See Ch. 5)	All Points Under Informative Criteria Plus Purposeful Use Visibility For All Maintained Contact With Aid Controlled Use Of Aid Neat Appearance Of Aid	All Points Under Informative Criteria Plus Create Or Show Need for Listeners Use of Appeals: Ethos, Pathos, Logos Meeting Objections (Pros & Cons) An Action Step Appropriate Organization Of Main Ideas

VI. TIME: It is expected that each speech will fall within the designated time limits for that speech.

VII. OVERALL: Your overall score may or may not reflect an arithmetic average of your individual scores. The whole may be less or more than the sum of its parts.

Speech 101 Section N
Fall Semester 1987

SPEECH EVALUATION FORM -- SPEECH 101

(Criteria below are explained on Speech Criteria sheet)
A = Excellent; B = Good; C = Fair; D = Poor; F = Unacceptable

	VOCAL	VISUAL	STYLE	CONTENT	SPECIFIC CRITERIA	TIME	OVERALL

Developed for use with Speech Criteria Sheet in COM 101 by Mrs. Betty Zane Morris and Dr. Denis Vogel, August, 1986